

PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEARING ON MARCH 8, 2016  
TESTIMONY ON SB 357- AN ACT CONCERNING GAMING  
DEAN MARKHAM/SCHAGHTICOKE TRIBAL NATION

Chairman Larson, Chairman Dargan, and members of the Committee.

My name is Dean Markham and I am here to testify on SB 357 - An Act Concerning Gaming. I am the Business Manager and an advisor to the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation and have previously had the honor to serve as a member of the Connecticut General Assembly.

You have heard from other individuals representing the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation today supporting a more focused approach to the topic of bingo as addressed in S.B. 357.

But in a short legislative session, the minimal language change to the bingo statute seems an unlikely priority of this Committee, especially with the undaunting fiscal crisis you all face. This bill would seem a likely vehicle to address commercial casino gaming issues unrelated to bingo.

If Public Safety & Security chooses to amend S.B. 357 to address commercial casino gaming, the Bill should include a nonpartisan study of the economic impact of existing gaming in our state, and what impact any expansion of this may have on the state and local municipalities.

It has been widely reported that the state is interested in approving commercial gaming in an effort to preserve Connecticut jobs. While this is a noble goal, preservation alone is not the issue - job creation is! For you to determine this without an independent legislative study would not be prudent or in the best interests of our citizens.

We believe that a comprehensive study on gaming would give lawmakers a clearer sense of the existing casino market, and would provide essential data to the state, should it decide to authorize commercial gaming for the first time, or expand tribal gaming. Some of the data that a study should deliver would include:

- What type of gaming facility would best suit the state of Connecticut? A Class II bingo facility or a bigger Class III facility similar to the existing tribal casinos in Southeastern Connecticut?
- Where is the best place to locate a gaming facility in Connecticut, specifically considering the locations of in-state and out-of-state gaming facilities and their impact on market saturation?
- What is the appropriate tax structure to ensure that any newly authorized gaming facility provides a fair deal to the community it is hosted within, the adjacent communities, and to the state?

The state also needs clarity on the regulatory structure that would be in place to oversee any commercial gaming established. The gaming that exists in Southeastern Connecticut is

tribal gaming, and is under the authority of the Federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. Should the state decide to authorize commercial gaming for the first time, it would need to create a new authority to administer and regulate the new commercial-gaming industry. We believe this issue should also be considered by a thorough study of the industry.

Expanded casino gaming is a separate issue from reform of the state's bingo laws, and should therefore be addressed in separate legislation. But if the Committee chooses to combine those issues, the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation stands ready to participate in a competitive process of expansion of gaming in Connecticut. We hope that this Committee will consider legislation that will allow our tribe to compete with the state's other tribes on equal terms, and also that the Committee will undertake a thorough economic study of the casino gaming industry and the impact expansion may have **before** authorizing new casino facilities. We believe that this approach will maximize the economic benefits for Connecticut.

I thank the members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify on S.B. 357, and hope that in the future we can work together as partners on important gaming issues.